

# **MR** Letters

## **JROTC Spells the Future**

The article "JROTC, Recent Trends and Developments" by Colonels John W. Corbett and Arthur T. Coumbe in the January-February 2001 issue of *Military Review* is right on target. As a retired Army officer in Southern California, I have been involved with JROTC programs through various professional military organizations.

Corbett and Coumbe are correct that JROTC is booming in many high schools. All four services have programs in Southern California. Many school districts desire the program because it teaches students discipline, responsibility, citizenship and respect for authority. I have seen the program flourish in low-income neighborhoods and in high schools composed of upper middle class students. General Colin Powell should be commended for re-energizing the program.

Although not a direct recruiting program, JROTC does orient young people to investigate the military. Graduates of JROTC are prime recruiting targets. The Army has a great opportunity to support this

and the senior program. Wise recruiters from all services attend JROTC award ceremonies in the spring to get a look at some of America's best youth.

One senior ROTC program at a local university had a joint training program with several surrounding high schools. More of such programs might orient high school graduates to consider senior ROTC at a university or pursue an appointment to a military academy.

JROTC is a great program for students from all economic backgrounds. Superintendents of school districts support the programs, and a ready pool of retired officers can become professors of military science in high schools. You have published an excellent account of a valuable, low-profile Army program and a prime recruiting area for future soldiers and officers. My only complaint about the article is the photo on page 42; it is not the best representation of an Army officer giving the oath of commissioning.

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Keegan divides his work into three parts. The theme of the first section, chronologically from the Peloponnesian Wars to 1800, is the motivation for war. The second section addresses 19th-century warfare, particularly European armies deployed outside the continent. Section three focuses on the 20th century and the explosion of technological advances in warfighting.

However, there is so much overlap among the themes that the distinctions Keegan attempts to make among the three eras are indistinct. Changes in technology lead to changes in tactics. Leadership is constant, but good leaders understand the relationships between technology, tactics and logistics and adapt doctrine accordingly.

The longbow at Agincourt in 1415 affected tactics much as the rifled musket did in a later century. Self-interest was as important to the Melians and Athenians in 416 B.C. as it was to Saddam Hussein in 1990. Separations of history into eras based on dominant themes serves little purpose and are easily challenged.

The value of Keegan's work is the assembly of primary source material. Sources cover warfare in China, the Aztecs in Mexico, Constantinople, Malta, the Crimea, the Indian wars of North America, colonial South Africa, Europe during World Wars I and II, Vietnam and the Gulf War. Students of military history rarely find a collection that contains writings by Josephus along with those of Studs Terkel. Yet, while including such diverse authors, Keegan has ensured that each author has had firsthand knowledge of the war or battle about which he writes. That personalizing of events is what brings credibility to these accounts.

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